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PSC 150E.01: Introduction to Political Theory

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University of Montana
Department of Political Science

PSC 150E
Summer 2002 (1st Five Week Session)
M-F 10:50-12:20pm
Office Hrs: MWTh 12:30-1:30pm

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Introduction to Political Theory

Course Description:

Introduction to Political Theory (PSC 150E) familiarizes students with the basic issues and ethical considerations that preoccupy the political theorist, including the origins of government and society, the nature of justice, and the distinction between private interest and the "public good." We will begin by considering the tension between politics and philosophy and continue with an examination of the major ideologies— liberalism, conservatism, Marxism, feminism etc.— that have shaped our contemporary political dialogues. We will conclude the course with the "end of ideology" debate.

At the outset, let us consider some basic questions about the relationship between political philosophy and ideology. First, is there a political theory that is not an ideology, or a theorist that is not an ideologue? If ideology is not the same as political philosophy, nor as good (as Plato suggests), then how does one avoid being labeled an ideologue? Lastly, what does it mean to you when someone says, "today it is no longer possible to construct a genuine political philosophy"?

Course Objectives: upon successfully completing the course work, the student should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the political and ethical values associated with Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Hobbes, Bentham, J.S. Mill, Burke, Marx, and Gilman.
2. Identify major themes and ideas associated with theories of utopianism, classical and reform liberalism, utilitarianism, conservatism, Marxism, feminism as well as contemporary variations such as neo-Marxism and post-modern feminism.
3. Complete (and orally defend) an analytical, interpretive essay, examining some aspect of the thinker's ideas regarding the good life, revolution, natural rights, or legitimate authority.

Texts:

Plato, *The Republic*
Aristotle, *The Politics and the Constitution of Athens*
Fac Packet, "Western Political Theory"

*In addition, short articles may be placed on reserved in the library.

Grading:

The work of the course consists of reading all assignments, attending lectures —students who ask questions usually have good lecture notes, completing a *midterm* (30% of course grade), and a 3-page, double-spaced *interpretive essay* (30%) and a *final* (30% of course grade). Student must be prepared to engage in

discussion and attend regularly (10% of course grade). Caution: three points will be deducted after the first absence. Excused absences will require the appropriate documentation.

Course Schedule:

- 5/28 Introduction to the Course; Plato's Indictment
Read: Plato, *The Republic*, Book I & II
- 5/29 Plato's Organic Theory of the State
Read: *The Republic*, Books III & IV
- 5/30 Utopianism: Plato's Ideal State & Perfect Justice: Community of Wives,
Children & Property
Read: *The Republic*, Book V
- 5/31 Read: *The Republic*, Book VI
Essays (due 5/31): What part(s) of the soul do Thrasymachus and
Glaucou appear to personify? Consider how each of them defines
justice.
- 6/3 Possibility of the Ideal State: the Ship & Cave Allegories
Read: *The Republic*, Book VII
- 6/4 Decline of the Ideal State; Plato v. Aristotle
Read: *The Republic*, Books VIII & IX
- 6/5 Aristotle: Aristotle's Biological Analysis: Family, Village, Polis
Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Books I & II
- 6/6 Aristotle's Classification of Constitutions
Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III
- 6/7 Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book IV
Essays (due 6/7): What does Aristotle find wrong about Plato's
utopia? Do you agree with his criticisms? Why or why not? See
Aristotle's *Politics* Book II
- 6/10 Aristotle on Revolution; Classical Liberalism: Introduction
Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book V

* * * June 11th Midterm: Plato & Aristotle * * * *

- 6/12 Classical Liberalism: Locke on Natural Rights, the Social Contract Theory, and Revolution
Read: FAC PAC vol. I selection from Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Locke's *Two Treatises*
- 6/13 Classical Liberalism: Locke & Property Rights; Adam Smith
Read: Packet selections from Locke's *Two Treatises*, and Smith
- 6/14 Essays (due 6/14): What, if anything, is wrong with Locke's case for "natural rights"? Is there anything wrong with his "natural right to revolution?"
- 6/17 Utilitarianism
Read: Packet selections from J.S. Mill's *Democratic Participation; Liberty & the Individual*
- 6/18 J.S. Mill & Reform Liberalism
- 6/19-6/20 Conservatism: Edmund Burke & the Critique of Political Idealism
Read: Packet selections on Burke, Wordsworth, and Oakeshott
- 6/20 Radicalism: Marx's Critique of Conservatism & Liberalism
Read: Packet selection from Marx & Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*
- 6/21 Essays (due 6/21): Is there a conservative tradition in America?
- 6/24 Marxism & the "Automatic Historical & Scientific Mechanism"
Read: Packet selection from Marx & Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*
- 6/25 Neo-Marxism: the Orthodox School vs. Revisionists
Read: Packet selections from Bernstein's *Evolutionary Socialism*;
 *Karl Kautsky, * Rosa Luxemburg (*Select Readings On Reserve)
- 6/26 Lenin, Stalin & Totalitarianism
Read: Packet selection from Lenin's *Imperialism* etc., and Trotsky's *Permanent Revolution*
- 6/27 Essays (due 6/27): Who appears to be Marx's "true" heir(s) among the neo-marxists and why? Be sure to support your argument with references to *The Communist Manifesto*.
- 6/28 Final